

## Message Text

SECRET

PAGE 01 ABU DH 01666 01 OF 02 111310Z  
ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----028524 111316Z /40

P R 111201Z JUN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC WASHDC PRIORITY 7962  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY  
INFO AMEMBASSY DOHA  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY  
AMEMBASSY MANAMA  
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

S E C R E T SECTION 1 OF 2 ABU DHBI 1666

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: XGDS-1  
TAGS: PGOV, PINT, TC, IR  
SUBJ: POLITICAL TENSIONS IN THE UAE

REFS: (A) TEHRAN 5512, (B) STATE 141246

1. WE FIND ATTITUDE OF IRANIAN MFA OFFICIAL REPORTED REF A  
PUZZLING AND REFLECTING WOEFUL LACK OF UNDERSTANDING OF UAE SCENE.  
OBVIOUSLY IF USG WERE NOT CONCERNED ABOUT INTERNAL POLITICAL AND  
SECURITY SITUATION IN UAE, DEPARTMENT WOULD NOT HAVE INSTRUCTED  
EMBASSY TEHRAN TO APPROACH GOI AS IT DID NOR WOULD IT HAVE AUTHORIZED  
US TO MAKE POINTS CONTAINED REF B TO SHAIKH ZAYID, SHAIKH RASHID,  
AND OTHER RULERS. THIS WE ARE NOW DOING. WE HOPE AT SAME TIME  
THAT OTHER GULF FRIENDS OF UAE, NOTABLY IRANIANS AND SAUDIS, WILL  
BE DOING THE SAME.

2. WE WOULD REMARK THAT VIEWS EXPRESSED BY SHAH AS WELL AS BY MFA  
INTERLOCTOR REFLECT VERY MUCH THOSE HELD BY SHAIKH RASHID AND  
THOSE AROUND HIM IN DUBAI. THIS IS NOT SURPRISING GIVEN LONG  
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AND RELATIVELY CLOSE DUBAI ASSOCIATION WITH IRAN AND IRANIAN  
BACKGROUND MANY OF DUBAI'S LEADING MERCHANT FAMILIES. THERE IS,

AS WE OURSELVES HAVE HEARD, TENDENCY IN DUBAI TO EXPLAIN AWAY  
PROBLEMS TROUBLING UAE WITH EXPLANATION THEY ARE ALL DUE TO  
INFLUENCE ON ZAYID OF VARIOUS FOREIGN ADVISERS AND MOST  
ESPECIALLY TO THAT OF AHMAD KHALIFAH SUWAIDI WHO HELD FORTH AS "EVIL

GENIUS" MANIPULATING ZAYID. IN PRECISELY SAME WAY ABU DHABIANS HAVE REFERRED TO MAHDI TAJIR AS BEING TROUBLE-MAKER ON DUBAI SIDE. WE UNAWARE OF REASONS WHICH SHAH MAY HAVE FOR SUSPECTING SUWAIDI OF COLLUSION WITH IRAQIS (TO WHAT END?) BUT HAVE A FEELING THESE SUSPICIONS MAY BE BASED AS MUCH IF NOT MORE ON IRANIAN DIPLOMATIC AND INTELLIGENCE REPORTS REFLECTING DUBAIS PREJUDICES AGAINST SUWAIDI THAN ON HARD EVIDENCE OF SUCH COLLUSION.

3. IT SEEMS TO US THAT IMPORATNT POINT IS NOT WHETHER USG OR IRAN OR SAUDI ARABIA OR EVEN UK IS "RESPONSIBLE" FOR WHAT GOES ON IN LOWER GULF. POINT IS THAT ALL OF US HAVE CLEAR INTEREST

IN SEEING UNITY OF UAE PRESERVED AND THIS UNIQUE ARABIAN EXPERIMENT IN FEDERAL GOVERNMENT SUCCEED. THIS GOAL WILL NOT BE ACHIEVED OR EVEN ADVANCED BY UAE'S FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS STAKING OUT PARTISAN POSITIONS ON BEHALF OF THIS OR THAT EMIRATE BUT BY MAKING CLEAR TO ALL RULERS WITHIN UAE THAT (A) WE SUPPORT CONTINUED FEDERAL UNITY OF ALL SEVEN EMIRATES, AND (B) WE WOULD NOT SUPPORT OR RECOGNIZE UNILATERAL SECESSION OF ONE OR MORE EMIRATES FROM FEDERATION. (LAST POINT GOES AS MUCH FOR ABU DHABI, WHERE THERE ARE ALSO SOME PAROCHIAL SECESSIONIST TENDENCIES, AS FOR DUBAI.)

4. POINT SHOULD ALSO BE MADE THAT WITHIN THESE ABOVE PARAMETERS UAE'S FRIENDS AND NEIGHBORS HAVE NO WISH TO INTERFERE IN WHAT ARE OBVIOUSLY DIFFICULT AND COMPLEX CONSTITUTIONAL AND POLITICAL QUESTIONS. RULERS AND PEOPLE OF THE EMIRATES MUST ULTIMATELY  
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WORK THESE OUT FOR THEMSELVES IN MANNER THAT BEST MEETS THEIR TRADITIONS, CURRENT CIRCUMSTANCES, AND ASPIRATIONS FOR THE FUTURE. WE DO NOT SUGGEST THAT EITHER OR BOTH SIDES HAVE ALWAYS ACTED WISELY OR DISINTERESTEDLY IN THE COURSE OF THIS DISPUTE. HOWEVER, WE BELIEVE IT WOULD BE GROSS OVER-SIMPLIFICATION OF THE PROBLEM TO SEE DISPUTE AS ONE BETWEEN HEROES AND VILLIANS OR TO ASSUME THAT THESE ISSUES HAVE ARISEN MERELY BECAUSE OF "BAD ADVICE" OR THE BANEFUL INFLUENCE OF "CUNNING ADVISERS."

5. AS AMERICANS SHOULD KNOW WELL FROM THEIR OWN HISTORY, FEDERALISM IS NOT AN EASY FORM OF GOVERNMENT. THERE ARE GENUINE ISSUES HERE THAT GO TO THE HEART OF WHAT THE FEDERAL SYSTEM OF GOVERNMENT IN THE EMIRATES SHOULD BE. HOW LEGITIMATE NEEDS FOR SOME DEGREE OF CENTRAL ORGANIZATION AND CONTROL WILL BE BALANCED AGAINST EQUALLY LEGITIMATE (AND STRONGLY HELD) CONCERNS FOR THE PRESERVATION OF SOME DEGREE OF LOCAL AUTONOMY AND CONTROL OVER POLICIES AND ACTIONS THAT AFFECT THE LIVES AND LIVELIHOODS OF THE UAE'S INHABITANTS ARE FUNDAMENTALLY WHAT THIS INTERNAL DISPUTE IS ALL ABOUT. THERE ARE NO SIMPLE SOLUTIONS TO SUCH ISSUES(WE ARE STILL FINE-TINKERING WITH OUR OWN FEDERAL SYSTEM) AND THERE MAY NOT BE ALL THAT MUCH THAT OUTSIDERS CAN APPRECIABLY DO AT THIS POINT TO

GUIDE OR CONTROL THE EVOLUTION OF THE UAE FEDERAL EXPERIMENT,  
EXCEPT TO STAND READY TO OFFER SYMPATHY AND TACTFUL ADVICE TO ALL  
UAE PARTIES SHOULD THEY APPEAR WILLING TO ACCEPT THAT.

6. IN PARA 3 OF REF A, TEHRAN'S MFA CONTACT TOUCHES ON A VERY VALID  
CONCERN, NAMELY THE LARGE NUMBERS OF FOREIGN WORKERS IN THE EMIRATES  
AND THE DEGREE TO WHICH THE ARMED FORCES AND EVEN THE POLICE FORCES  
ARE RECRUITED FROM AMONG NON-EMIRIANS. THIS IS A MATTER OF  
CONCERN TO UAE LEADERS THEMSELVES. GIVEN THE SMALL SIZE OF THE UAE  
POPULATION AND THE DISINCLINATION OF MANY OF ITS NOUVEAUX RICHES  
NATIVE INHABITANTS TO TAKE UP UNPLEASANT OR FINANCIALLY UNREWARDING  
OCCUPATIONS LIKE THOSE OF SOLDIER OR POLICEMAN, MUCH LESS CON-  
STRUCTION WORKERS AND DRILLER, WE SEE NO EARLY SOLUTION TO THIS  
PROBLEM SHORT OF A DRASTIC TURNDOWN IN THE FEDERATION'S ECONOMY.

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ONE ANSWER, WHICH HAS BEEN URGED ON THE UAE SINCE THE INITIAL MILI-  
TARY REORGANIZATION PROPOSALS  
WERE SUBMITTED BY TRIPARTITE SAUDI/  
KUWAITI/JORDANIAN SURVEY TEAM IN 1975, WOULD BE TO REDUCE THE SIZE  
OF THE ARMED FORCES FROM THEIR PRESENT STRENGTH OF OVER 40,000 TO  
A MORE COMPACT, WELL-TRAINED, AND HIGHLY MOBILE ARMY IN WHICH  
THE PERCENTAGE OF NATIONALS, AT LEAST IN THE OFFICER CORPS, COULD  
BE HIGHER THAN IT IS AT PRESENT AND THE NEED FOR LARGE NUMBERS OF  
FOREIGN ADVISERS, TECHNICIANS, ETC., CORRESPONDINGLY REDUCED. THIS  
WOULD BE USEFUL ADVICE FOR THIS SMALL COUNTRY'S FRIENDS TO URGE  
UPON THE UAE LEADERSHIP (ESPECIALLY IN ABU DHABI) BUT IT WOULD  
NEED TO BE DONE VERY, VERY CAREFULLY SO AS NOT TO AROUSE UAE  
SUSPICIONS THAT THOSE TENDERING SUCH ADVICE HAVE AS AN ULTERIOR  
MOTIVE THE WEAKENING THE UAE'S ABILITY TO DEFEND ITS INDEPENDENCE  
AND TERRITORIAL SOVEREIGNTY FROM ENCROACHMENT BY STRONGER NEIGHBORS.  
FACT THAT SIZE OF FORCES IN ABU DHABI HAS BEEN ONE OF ISSUES RAISED  
BY RASHID IS FURTHER COMPLICATING FACTOR.

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ACTION SS-25

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 /026 W  
-----028509 111317Z /40

P R 111201Z JUN 78  
FM AMEMBASSY ABU DHABI  
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 7963  
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN PRIORITY  
INFO AMEMBASSY DOHA  
AMEMBASSY JIDDA  
AMEMBASSY  
AMEMBASSY MANAMA  
AMEMBASSY MUSCAT

S E C R E T SECTION 2 OF 2 ABU DHABI 1666

EXDIS

7. THIS LEADS TO THE QUESTION, ALSO REAISED BY THE IRANIAN MFA OFFICIAL, ABOUT WHAT MORE THE USG COULD OR SHOULD DO TO ASSURE THE INTERNAL SECURITY OF THE LOWER GULF STATES. THIS IS A LEGITIMATE QUESTION BUT ONE WHICH THE US CANNOT BE EXPECTED TO ANSWER IN ISOLATION. WE HERE ARE NOT CONVINCED THAT A PROGRAM OR MAJOR ARMS SALES, FOR EXAMPLE, IS THE PRESCRIPTION ALTHOUGH EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF UAE ARMED FORCES LEADERSHIP THROUGH TRAINING IN US AND OTHER FRIENDLY MILITARY SCHOOLS MIGHT BE A STEP TOWARD SOLVING SOME OF THE PROBLEMS NOTED IN PARA 5 ABOVE. WE HEARTILY AGREE WITH EMBASSY TEHRAN'S RECOMMENDATION THIS IS MATTER WHICH MERITS FURTHER STUDY IN WASHINGTON AND OTHER INTERESTED CAPITALS. CONVERSTAIONS REPORTED REF A CONSTITUTE USEFUL FIRST STEP TOWARD CONTINUING DIALOGUE WITH IRANIANS ON THESE AREAS OF CONCERN. WE LOOK FORWARD TO FURTHER SUCH EXCHANGES, NOT ONLY IN TEHRAN BUT IN OTHER CONCERNED CAPITALS ADDRESSED BY REF B.

8. FOR TEHRAN: RE LAST SENTENCE PARA 4 URTEL, TEHRAN ADDRESSEE NOT ONLY OF ALL ABU DHABI CABLES ON THIS SUBJECT BUT ALSO OF NUMEROUS MEMCONS AND AN AIRGRAM POUCHED JUNE 7.

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THESE MAY PROVIDE ADDITIONAL INFORMATION ON WHICH TO ENGAGE IRANIANS IN FURTHER DISCUSSION RE UAE SITUATION.

9. FOR DEPARTMENT: UNLESS DEPARTMENT OR TEHRAN DISAGREE, PROPOSE THAT THIS CABLE AS WELL AS REF A BE PASSED EMBASSY LONDON  
DICKMAN

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## Message Attributes

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